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FOR THE AMBASSADOR FROM THE SECRETARY

1. I have just noted UP item No. 50 of August 29 which notes Minister of Economy, Au Ngoc Ho, as saying: "I think Nixon finally has the presidency in the bag this time and I think that means not much change in the course of the war."

2. Ho's alleged statement underlines the problem which will be confronting us between now and the election. In view of the high interest which it will generate and the obvious importance of the Viet-Nam problem as an election issue, there will be undoubtedly heavy pressure on various members of the GVN to comment on the various public statements of the two candidates on Viet-Nam and even to express a preference between the candidates. It would seem to me that it is in the best interests of the GVN and ourselves that its public officials take a

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position of no comment on the presidential campaign. It is realized, of course, that members of the National Assembly as elected officials will be compelled to comment from time to time and we would certainly not be interested in trying to muffle their expressions. However, the actual members of the government are another thing, speaking as they do for Prime Minister Huong and Thieu and the entity with which we have a legal relationship. I wonder, therefore, if it would be worthwhile having a quiet word with President Thieu and perhaps with Prime Minister Huong within the next few days, making the suggestion that they and their Ministers refrain from commenting on the progress of the electoral campaign in the United States and particularly expression of preference for either one of the two principal candidates. This would seem to be in our mutual interest.

GP-2

END

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